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## Contact us...

**Address:** DANTES-TTT  
6490 Saufley Field  
Rd. Pensacola,  
FL 32509-5243

**Phone:** 1.800.231.6242

**Email:** [ttt@voled.doded.mil](mailto:ttt@voled.doded.mil)

**Web site:**  
[www.ProudToServeAgain.com](http://www.ProudToServeAgain.com)



# New TTT program to tackle Las Vegas' teacher shortage

Capt. Dayton Rogalski knows exactly what he's going to do after retirement and where: teach in the Las Vegas area.

It's a peace of mind made possible by the new Hire in Advance Program, which hopes to address the national need for teachers that is especially acute in the Las Vegas area. The program is a joint venture between the Clark County School District (CCSD) and the Mountain West Troops to Teachers office ([www.mwttt.com](http://www.mwttt.com)), managed by regional director Joe Morgan.

In general, the program allows active military members to apply, interview and accept teaching positions up to three years before they're scheduled to leave active duty. During that time, military members can finish the necessary schooling and teaching requirements, facilitating a seamless transition between active duty and the start of their new careers.

The program was unveiled at a ceremony at Las Vegas' J.E. Manch Elementary School on June 9. At the ceremony, the program's first three Hire in Advance Program agreements were awarded to Capt. Rogalski, Tech Sgt. Shanell Wingate (Air Force Reserve) and military spouse Michelle Spires. Mrs. Spires is eligible through Spouses to Teachers, Troops to Teachers' satellite program.

In the past, the CCSD waited until Troops to Teachers participants had finished their teaching requirements before hiring them. The new program will change that hiring practice.

"When there's someone from the program who has an interest in being a teacher, we want to make a commitment right away," CCSD Associate Superintendent of Human Resources George Ann Rice said at the ceremony.

Capt. Rogalski will retire as a 23-year veteran when he leaves the Air Force in 2007. In the meantime, he will take the

**(Continued on Page 6)**



*Capt. Gradowski signs a Hire in Advance agreement, with CCSD official George Ann Rice looking on*



*Sgt. Wingate*



*Michelle Spires*

# TTT Profile

## Busy summer for nationally-recognized TTT alums Eric Combs and Daniel Leija

The irony for teachers like Eric Combs and Daniel Leija is that the dedication they've shown to their new profession might end up costing them some well-earned vacation days.

Of course, if they minded sacrificing a little free time, Combs and Leija – alumni of the Troops to Teachers program – probably wouldn't have been nationally recognized as two of the top teachers in the country. This past school year, Combs was selected the Ohio Teacher of the Year for 2006 and Leija was awarded the American Star of Teaching Award for Texas.

Leija – a 22-year Air Force veteran – is a 4th grade teacher at Gregoria Esparza Elementary in San Antonio, a school where 96 percent of students come from poor homes and qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. He was awarded the American Star of Teaching Award – given to just one teacher per state – as part of the Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative.

"I chose elementary school for one simple reason; the need for male role models at the lower grade levels," Leija said.

Since the award Leija has appeared on a Department of Education TV broadcast, was invited to sit on the Texas Teacher Leadership Council and has been asked to take on more leadership roles at his school. Over the summer, he will attend two teaching seminars and work on an instructional Power Point presentation for his grade level..

Leija isn't used to having time off. His "retirement" lasted about 48 hours. His last day as NCOIC for Family Care and Physical Therapy clinics at Randolph AFB was on a Friday. He started his new job as a kindergarten teacher the following Monday.

"The discipline learned in the military is now paying huge dividends," Leija said. "The military member is well grounded in seeing a task through to completion."

Combs has been just as busy after being selected Ohio's top teacher. The 20-year Air Force vet is finishing up his fifth year at Fairborn (Ohio) High, where he teaches history. He also started a school-within-a-school initiative called Delta Team, targeting the school's highest at-risk students.

"The first year I was trying to deny myself. I didn't want to be known as Sergeant Combs," he said. "But then you realize that (the military) is kind of part you. It's who you are...Part of succeeding in the military is doing great things with less. In education it's kind of the same."



*Eric Combs, Ohio's Teacher of the Year for 2006*



*Daniel Leija receives Texas' Star of Teaching Award*

Since the award, Combs has spoken at gatherings of the Ohio Education Association, Student Teacher Educators of America and the Ohio School Board Associations. In July, he will be the closing keynote speaker for the triennial Department of Defense Worldwide Education Symposium in Orlando. In the spring of 2007, he will return to D.C. for a White House ceremony in which the national award will be announced.

# TTT Profile

## Mix of robotics and Navajo pride leads to scholarship at Chinle (Ariz.) H.S.

A few weeks after school started at Arizona's Chinle High, TTT alum Amos Chiarappa received an e-mail invitation for his school to compete in a national robotics competition, something the small school located outside a Navajo reservation had never done.

"I was told by my previous (executive officer) that to be successful in any endeavor, take ownership of these types of programs," said Chiarappa, a 21-year Navy veteran. "Even if it is just an e-mail."

Several months later, what started off as "just an e-mail" turned into a bit of history and a college scholarship. Chiarappa organized a team of 18 students that became the first all-Native American team to compete in the prestigious NASA *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics international competition. His efforts got students involved in math and science and led to a \$40,000 scholarship to Embry-Riddle University for team member Rene Valenzuela.

Not everything went smoothly for Chinle High, however.

Chiarappa first had to obtain a \$6,000 grant to fund the project, and, because of the school's remote location, there was a delay in receiving the robot building materials.

After those issues were settled, the Navajo Heroes (the robotics team's name) made the trip to the regional meet in Phoenix. They failed to move on to the national meet, but that took nothing away from their accomplishment. Chinle High won the Judges' Award for their efforts and a standing ovation from the audience.

"It's an indicator that no matter where you are, or what cultural background, you can be successful," Chiarappa said.

### On the Web

For more information on teaching jobs in Arizona, including testimonial videos, visit the TTT state office at [www.azed.gov/troops2teachers](http://www.azed.gov/troops2teachers).



*A Chinle High student prepares his school's robot (adorned with a Troops to Teachers sticker) for competition*



**Left:** After some shipping delays, the robot kit arrives in late January. A few months later, Chinle High became the first all-Native American team to take part in the NASA First Robotics competition.

**Right:** Chinle's robot, "Navajo Heroes" features a memorial plaque to four Navajos who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in Iraq.





## Former Marine wins national history award

Mark High never forgot the lessons he learned in the Marine corps. In fact, those lessons helped him win a national award.

In June, the Gunnison (Colo.) middle school teacher was selected the winner of the 2006 Richard T. Farrell Teacher of Merit Award for outstanding success in teaching history. The award is sponsored by the National History Day (NHD) organization, and is given annually to a teacher who develops and uses innovative methods to make history interesting for students.



Mark High

As the national winner, High receives \$1,000, a commemorative plaque and a collection of historical documentaries from PBS VIDEO.

High, who teaches seventh grade social studies, has dressed up in costumes, staged a mock trial of Christopher Columbus and organized a "Renaissance Night". He also created a classroom ranking system called a royalty chart to reward student achievement. Students begin the year as peasants in the Kingdom of Gunnison Middle School. Based on a values system they move from peasant to knight, lord, earl and finally emperor.

"Once you've been in (the military) for a long time values become a part of you and I try to bring that to my class, things like discipline and responsibility" High said.

High was an active member of the Marines from 1983-87 before serving in the reserves until 1994. His last assignment was at Buckley Air Field in Denver where he served as an artillery captain before leaving to concentrate full time on teaching.

For more information on National History Day, visit [www.NHD.org](http://www.NHD.org).

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## Logo unveiled for Spouses to Teachers DoD pilot program

Spouses to Teachers now has something to go along with its growing program: a logo.

Unveiled in June, the logo features a purple flag representing all services, and a Stars-and-Stripes apple symbolizing the teaching profession and the U.S. military.



Spouses to Teachers assists military spouses interested in a teaching career and, for those spouses already teaching, assists in the state-to-state certification transfers. The program provides counseling and guidance on state certification requirements, certification options and state employment resources. Funding is also available to eligible spouses toward the reimbursement of testing fees required for state teacher licensure/certification.

The Department of Defense pilot program has grown from six to 14 states since 2004. For more information, visit [www.SpousesToTeachers.com](http://www.SpousesToTeachers.com) or e-mail [stt@voled.doded.mil](mailto:stt@voled.doded.mil).

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## Western Governors University offers \$1,500 scholarship

Western Governors University (WGU) is not only making it easier to take classes, it's also making it more affordable.



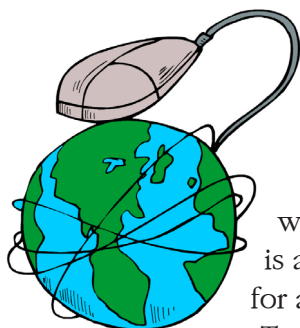
Eligible members of Troops to Teachers and Spouses to Teachers are now able to receive an additional \$1,500 scholarship from WGU Teachers College, which offers online teacher programs leading to licensure/certification.

WGU is the nation's only online competency-based university and is fully accredited. It was founded by the governors of 19 U.S. states.

For more information, visit [www.wgu.edu/ttt](http://www.wgu.edu/ttt) or call toll free (866) 225-5948.

# On the web, briefs, etc.

## On the web...



The Troops to Teachers web site features more than just general information on the program.

TTT's web site, [www.ProudToServeAgain.com](http://www.ProudToServeAgain.com), is also a great place to look for a job, glean advice from a Troops to Teacher that's

already teaching (Mentor Connection) and, if you're an administrator, you can post job openings and look for qualified candidates.

Other things you can find:

- The March 1 status report, which gives an update on the program's participation numbers. (Click [here](#) to view the report).
- An August, 2005 study by the NCEI that details how TTT is not just providing teachers, but teachers that are in the highest need. (Click [here](#)).
- Tips on how to write a resume, cover letter and tips on acing an interview. (Click [here](#)).

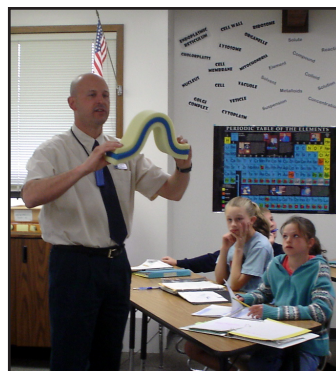
## TTT chief honored



*Dr. Gantz* John R. Gantz, Ed.D., the Troops to Teachers chief, was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame on May 6 in Dallas, Texas. The Hall of Fame, began in 1995 and was created to honor leaders in the fields of continuing education and adult learning.

"Working for the military voluntary education programs and with TTT over the past 40 years has been a wonderful and rewarding career. To have my efforts and accomplishments recognized by selection into the Hall of Fame is a tremendous honor," Dr. Gantz said.

## In the classroom



*Brett Burtis is a Science and Health teacher at Tongue River Middle School in Sheridan, Wyo. The former Marine is one of more than 9,000 former military members that have utilized TTT and are now teaching in public schools.*

## Northern Plains partners with Wyo. Adjutant General

In May, The Northern Plains Troops to Teachers office, directed by LeRoy Gaub, signed a partnership agreement with Maj. General Ed Wright, the Adjutant General for the state of Wyoming.

The general conducts Town Hall meetings around the state, and, with the agreement, Maj. General Wright will incorporate the Troops to Teachers program into those meetings.

Wright served more than 20 years with the Wyoming Army National Guard and he has also served as an elementary school principal and teacher.

For information on Northern Plains TTT, visit [www.montana.edu/ttt](http://www.montana.edu/ttt).

## In the news

Look for a Q&A with TTT chief Dr. John Gantz in July's issue of Decision Times, a supplement that runs in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Times.

Also, look for a story on Eric Combs and Daniel Leija in the Aug. 7 edition of the Air Force Times.



# Connections

## Get hired in advance in Las Vegas

(continued from Page 1)

five remaining classes he needs to become eligible to teach high school math and business in Clark County.

"This partnership that came up with the Hire in Advance made all the difference," he said. "I might not have done it (gone into teaching) without it."

New teachers are sorely needed in the Las Vegas area, the nation's fifth-largest

school district, which has experienced a population boom that has seen students and schools grow faster than teachers can be hired. CCSD officials estimate a shortfall of 1,200 teachers for next school year. In addition, specialty teachers have been forced back into regular classrooms and the district has had to suspend plans to reduce class sizes.

At the same ceremony, Nevada's Troops to Teachers office honored its Teacher of the Year, Robert "Bobby" Jameson. Jameson retired as a master sergeant after more than 20 years in the Air Force. He is in his third year at Las Vegas' Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School.



Jameson

### Want to know more?

For more information on the Hire in Advance Program, call the Mountain West Troops to Teachers office at (800) 438-6851. Or, visit the Nevada TTT office online by clicking [here](#).



### In their own words...

"(As) we prepare to celebrate our nation's 236<sup>th</sup> birthday...I pause to reflect as to why I joined the military 25 years ago next month and now teach the young people...Last month I successfully completed my third year on station at Pueblo Magnet High School in South Tucson...It is a school filled with many English as a Second Language students, many of which haven't even got the funds to buy lunch. The school grounds are open from 6:30 AM until 10 PM even through the summer, and there are kids there all the time waiting for tomorrow. This is the place Uncle Sam has sent me, and my duty is to make a difference, just as I did for 21 years. I am just as proud in Pueblo Blue as I was in Air Force Blue...I look at my teaching job the same way I did my military job: I am defending our way of life...Until relieved, I will stand my watch and proudly do my duty."

– **TTT alum Pete Pederson, 21-year Air Force veteran, Technology Instructor, Pueblo Magnet H.S.**

## Have something to share?

Do you have an opinion, story, photo, news or any other type of item you think would make a good addition to *TTT Connections*, the Troops to Teachers newsletter? If so, let us hear about it.

E-mail Jim Scavino at [jscavino@voled.doded.mil](mailto:jscavino@voled.doded.mil).

